



2013

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Volume I

2013

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## Foreword

“A major difficulty in translation is that a word in one language seldom has a precise equivalent in another one.”

(A. Schopenhauer)

“Poetic translation is the transmigration of poetic souls from one language into another.”

(J. Rosenberg)

Some might say that a translated poem is an impossibility—metaphors, cultural references, and the play of sound and sense do not transfer from one language system to another the way a set of instructions can. So why propose a journal of literary translation called *Transference*? Both “translation” and “transference” derive from the Latin verb *transferre*, which literally means “to carry across.” “Translation” refers to something that has already been brought across passively and in a completed state, while “transference” is the act of someone bringing something or someone else across always in a state of incompleteness. “Transference,” therefore, reflects more closely what literary translation is: the bridge between cultures and centuries that is ever changing and, by necessity, never perfect, never complete. This bridge, however, remains essential if we wish to continue to see beyond our own horizons into other perspectives on the human condition.

Each of the poems and the commentaries gathered in this volume posits an interpretation of various experiences common to all people, among them grief, joy, desire, and wonder. It is our hope that as an ensemble, the pieces form a single, kaleidoscopic work bringing these discrete intersections together into a unified representation of the language work and play that makes us quintessentially human.

It is in our nature to desire to communicate with others in order to understand and to be understood. All of the contributors to this volume have attempted communication, both with the poets of the original texts and the readers of our journal. This act of transference is distinctly different from how the term is used in psychology—whereas a patient unconsciously redirects feelings from one person to another, a translator consciously takes the feelings of

another and tries to experience them, and therefore have an audience experience them, through the means of a different language. We encourage our readers to seek out the original poems in the original languages, as well as other translations of the poems, to continue this mode of communication, both with our contributors' translations and their personal commentaries.

So maybe a translated poem is a paradox, but the impossibility of a “pure” translation presents its own advantages. In the attempt to reproduce the poetic experience of the original poem's reader in a different idiom, new poems come into being. Layered with form and content resulting from this transfer across language boundaries, the new poems offer an opportunity to engage in the inherent playfulness of language. It is a serious game, an undertaking that is fraught with challenges, but, as is the case with confronting most paradoxes, well worth the travail, and necessary.

David Kutzko and Molly Lynde-Recchia, editors-in-chief



I

Like a tree on top of forest grass  
Spreads its leafy hands through the leaves  
And, leaning on a shrub, propagates  
Its branches sideways, widthwise—  
So I shot up gradually. My muscles  
Swelled, my rib cage expanded. From the blue  
Goblet with prickly alcohol, my lungs  
Filled to the smallest alveoli, and my heart  
Took blood from the veins and veins  
Returned the blood, and took the blood again  
And it was like a transfiguration  
Of simple happiness and simple grief  
In a prelude and fugue for organ.

II

I would be sufficient for all living things,  
Both plants and people,  
Who'd been dying somewhere near  
And somewhere at the other end of the earth

In unimaginable suffering, like Marsyas,  
Who was flayed alive. If I'd given them my life,

I would not become any poorer  
In life, in myself, in my blood.

But I myself became like Marsyas. I'd long lived  
Among the living, and became like Marsyas.

### III

Sometimes, when you lie in the summer heat  
And look at the sky, and the hot air  
Rocks like a cradle above you, you  
Find a strange angle of senses:  
There is a gap in the crib, and through it  
An outer cold penetrates, as if  
Some icy needle...

### IV

Like a tree splashes the earth  
Above itself, collapses from a steep  
Undermined by water, its roots in the air,  
The rapids plucking at its branches,  
So my double on the other rapids  
Travels from the future to the past.  
From a height, I follow myself with my eyes  
And clutch at my heart.

Who gave me  
Trembling branches, a powerful trunk  
And weak, helpless roots?  
Death is vile, but life is worse,  
And there's no bridling its tyranny.  
Are you leaving, Lazarus? Well, go away!  
Behind you, half the sky still blazes.  
Nothing holds us together. Sleep  
Vivacious one, fold your hands  
On your chest, and sleep.

Come by, take this, I don't need anything,  
What I love I'll give away, and what I don't  
I'll give away. I want to replace you,  
But if I say that I'm going to turn into you,  
Don't believe me, poor child, I'm lying...

O these hands with fingers like vines,  
Open and wet eyes,  
And the shells of small ears,  
Like saucers full of a love song,  
And wings, curved sharply by the wind.

Don't believe me, poor child, I lie,  
I'll try to break away like one condemned to die,  
But I cannot transgress this strangeness  
Can't flap your wings or touch your eyes  
With your little finger, or look  
With your eyes. You're one  
Hundred times stronger than me, you are  
A song about yourself, and I'm  
A deputy of the tree and God,  
And by your judgment, sentenced for my song.

1969

Arseny Tarkovsky (1907–1989) spent most of his life as a well-known translator of Turkmen, Georgian, Armenian, Arabic, and other languages. During the Second World War, he worked as a war correspondent until he was wounded in a German attack, which would cost him his leg. His first book of poems had been accepted for publication in 1946, but in the wake of Zhdanov's attack on Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoschenko, the book was never released. Tarkovsky's first published volume, *Before the Snow*, was published in 1962, at the age of 55, to the acclaim of Akhmatova, who called his work "both contemporary and eternal."

In a time when official Russian poetry was anything but independent, Tarkovsky's verse maintained its resolute allegiance to a poetic sound and vision that hearkened back to the masters of Russian poetry. Akhmatova called Tarkovsky the one "real poet" in the Soviet Union. In her words, "of all contemporary poets Tarkovsky alone is completely his own self, completely independent. He possesses the most important feature of a poet which I'd call the birthright." In his spiritual and poetic independence, he outlasted the dross of totalitarianism.

Vividly musical, rich in Biblical and folk echoes, Tarkovsky's poems exude a poignant gratitude for living on earth, and a childlike wonder in nature, even though they are often set in the backdrop of terrible heartbreak of one of the most miserable centuries in Russian history.

The most difficult aspect of translating Russian poetry is carrying across the richness of its music—the diversity of meters, rhythms, and rhyme: Tarkovsky's poetry is, in the end, a poetry that lives through its music. Any simple literal translation misses the collision of sound and meaning that makes poetry *poetry*. In "After the War," Tarkovsky often employs unrhymed blank verse; unrhymed poetry remains unusual in Russian poetry. As importantly, Tarkovsky alludes to the mythical satyr Marsyas, whose arrogant challenge of Apollo to a musical contest led to his being flayed to death.

Dima Psurtsev and I began working together in 1992, when I lived in Moscow on a Watson Fellowship, studying contemporary Russian poetry. Dima suggested that I read Tarkovsky, and we did some basic translations of a handful of his most well-known poems. In 2009, back in Russia, I proposed that we might formalize our collaboration and translate a full-length collection of

Tarkovsky in English translation, since none had been published. Often, the process involved either my sending Dima a first draft, after which he would provide an annotation which would point out translation errors or particularly complex and allusive phrases, for future revision. We'd trade the poem back and forth until both of us were at peace that we had created something alive enough to let it into the world. The present translation was a product of this collaboration.



Andrew Gudel  
A Vase of Plum Flowers

Tan Yuanchun  
瓶梅

In the vase for ten days already,  
My worries fall away when, fortunately, they open late.  
No need to borrow the east wind to force them,  
Or bully them with nighttime rain.  
Their fragrance comes in silence,  
Their charm in quiet hours.  
More beautiful even than the trees on the mountains,  
For tourists know nothing of these.

Andrew Gudel  
The Green Wutong Tree

Zhu Heling  
碧梧

The shade of the green *wutong* hides my study,  
Branches a hundred feet high would entice even a phoenix.  
The new jade leaves float like a curtain of green,  
Luxuriant shadows, deep cover and a smell like incense.  
The cool that comes feels like a basket of early Autumn,  
The leaves drop in a silver bed that sparkles with dew.  
Though the eastern courtyard catches the morning sun,  
Down by the roots it's dark, like standing beside a  
towering mountain.

Andrew Gudel  
Mapao Spring

Song Wan  
馬跑泉

Twisting, turning Qinting Road,  
I stop my cart—A pleasant trip!  
Getting out, I discover the autumn rain is clearing.  
I sit and fall in love with the spring flowing over the rocks.  
Pruned willows fill the deep banks,  
Barren cattails reach the far fields.  
I will beg to retire and go dig myself a cave to live in,  
And float about on fishing boats by moonlight.

Andrew Gudel  
Mountain Temple

Yao Nai  
山寺

The surrounding mountains are alive with autumn sounds,  
The high forest is dark with evening falling,  
Clouds wrap around the cold hazel trees.  
A curtain of darkness descends over the front wall.  
The wind whistles at the temple gate,  
Flying leaves fill the gathered cliffs.  
Isles of bamboo in a stream of darkness,  
Murmuring bird-calls from arching rocks.  
I wanted to see beyond the mouth of the valley,  
The distant peaks are blue in the setting sun.  
Within the twisting mist,  
The myriad gullies clasp ridges and cracks.  
Is there no wise man or hermit  
With whom I can stay?  
The crescent moon's light is already gone,  
And I wistfully leave off writing.

Rather than the more well-known (and more often translated) poets of the Tang Dynasty, I picked one lesser-known poet each from the Ming (Tan Yuanchun) and Qing (Yao Nai) Dynasties as well as two (Zhu Heling and Song Wan) whose lives began in one Dynasty and ended in the next. For both Zhu and Song, the midpoint of their lives saw collapse, chaos and war, followed by the establishment and consolidation of a new dynasty.

Classical Chinese is very terse—often omitting pronouns and prepositions—and its grammar is very flexible, so a single line (and sometimes entire poems) can be both ambiguous in meaning and have multiple translations. There is also a rich tradition of allusions and of borrowing turns of phrase from earlier poets which suffuses additional, unwritten yet implied meanings into lines and poems.

With each piece, I read through it several times; first silently, then out loud—Chinese poetry is meant to be recited—and finally jotted down notes on the “feeling” it gave me. Was it joyous or wistful? Were there deeper meanings and if so, what were they? Take, for example, the poem “A Vase of Plum Flowers.” Plum trees flower in late winter in China and large numbers of people would (and still do) go out to view the blossoms. At the same time, connoisseurship was considered one of the marks of a scholar in late-Ming times and it was common practice to keep cut flowers in one’s study. So by putting a plum branch in a vase to enjoy privately, Tan Yuanchun implies both his scholarly refinement and his purposeful separation from the public sphere.

Only when I thought I had a good “feeling” for the poems did I begin rough-drafting the translations. The finished rough drafts were left to sit for a week, then re-checked for accuracy. Another week was spent smoothing the drafts before they were shown to an English-speaking Chinese friend for comment.

Each poem presented a unique challenge and each had at least one line that I puzzled over for anywhere from an hour to an entire day. In the above-mentioned “A Vase of Plum Flowers” it was a short sentence that, when translated into English, contained consecutive ambiguous adverbs. In “Mountain Temple,” it was a line that read: 於茲衣蘿薜—literally, “with grass-mat clothes (or ‘to wear’) tree-moss climbing-fig.” (The last two characters, if inverted, become a literary allusion to another work that predates Yao Nai’s by approximately sev-

enteen centuries.) Yet in the context of the poem, this list of items implies staying with a hermit.

Despite the challenges, however, each poem also brought moments of sudden, joyful revelation and translation's sweetest reward—the feeling of touching another mind separated by both time and space.

John Perry  
The Picket Fence

Christian Morgenstern  
Der Lattenzaun

A picket fence stood on the green,  
with spaces you could see between.

An architect one day appeared,  
and thoughtfully caressed his beard,

then took the spaces from the fence  
and built a splendid residence.

The fence, meantime, stood all forlorn:  
the slats were there—the spaces, gorn!

—embarrassing for all the town;  
and so the Council took it down.

The architect? He ran away  
to Afri- or Americay.

Christian Morgenstern (1871–1914) was a German poet of significant nonsense and lexical buffoonery, in time and style roughly midway between Edward Lear and Ogden Nash, though with an enhanced philosophical component derived from Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. The poem presented here is taken from his first collection *Galgenlieder* (*Gallows Songs*), published in 1905.

“The Picket Fence” strikes one as a verbal simulation of an optical illusion, in which the eye-brain collaboration obliges the observer to see a two-dimensional drawing as one or another of two possible objects, depending on where it interprets the boundary between figure and field. Or as a philosophical riff on the equal significance of being and nothingness, presence and absence, matter and void. As art derives its power from the juxtaposition of form and space, so music builds beauty from the interplay of sound and silence, and poetry from what stays unsaid as much as from what is said.

The poem is typical of Morgenstern's sophisticated nursery-rhyme mode, expressing his observation (shared with Nietzsche) that in every adult there hides a child, the immortal creator *homo ludens*. It is reminiscent of that master of English philosophical nonsense, Lewis Carroll, as exemplified in the Cheshire Cat: which is the more remarkable, a cat without a grin or a grin without a cat?

My translation faithfully reproduces the form of the original, which is an absolute prerequisite in comic or whimsical verse (and preferably in all verse translation, if technically feasible). It is the test of validity: if the translator can't at least simulate the packaging, then the whole undertaking is mere plagiarism. Translating the content, of course, demands a little relaxation of the rules, beginning with the first line, which rejects the folktale cliché, “There was once....” “Thoughtfully caressed his beard” is pure padding—but then, so is the original line. With its spaces purloined, the German fence is naked, literally a “gruesome and vulgar sight.” My “embarrassing” perhaps fails to make this explicit, but concurs in its tacit condemnation of the action of the prim city fathers. The folksy conversion *Ameriko*, luckily for my rhyme, has its exact Irish-English equivalent in the folksong chorus form “Americay.”

The mob descended faster, shouting. They all came from the background, from behind the trees, from behind the wood of the frame, of the house. Each white face had an animated look—and the weightiest words effaced themselves in their wake. At a sound from the darkest corner everything stopped, everyone stopped, even the one whose eyes were turned toward the wall. And then, because of the wind, the flowers on the wallpaper and the fabrics moved.

The poetry of Pierre Reverdy—particularly the poems in prose from the 1910s and 1920s that brought him wide recognition, such as *Les ardoises du toit* (*Roof Slates*) and *Étoiles peintes* (*Painted Stars*)—are famously elliptical, atmospheric, seductive, and strange. Living and writing at the center of Parisian culture, closely associated with Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Gris, and Dérain, all of whom illustrated one or more of his books, Reverdy has been called a Cubist or a Surrealist poet, and while indeed he often seemed to use words as paint, he scoffed at such categories and continues to transcend them.

Kenneth Rexroth, his pioneering translator, called Reverdy's style "the conscious, deliberate dissociation and recombination of elements into a new artistic entity made self-sufficient by its rigorous architecture ... Poetry such as this attempts not just a new syntax of the word. Its revolution is aimed at the syntax of the mind itself" (*Pierre Reverdy: Selected Poems*, New Directions, 1969: vi–vii). Reverdy was treating surface meaning and point of view in much the same way that Gris or Braque worked with geometric planes and perspective. The setting and tone of his work are often equally paradoxical: closed spaces suggesting the infinite, portrayed with a disoriented calm. The mind of the poems is caught up in its own space-time geometry, and the reader, as often as not, is left on a slippery surface, horizontal one moment and vertical the next. Tone is all-important, and my challenge and pleasure has been to attempt to catch that tone in English, allowing Reverdy's poems to remain as beautifully peculiar as they are.

In "Tumult," from *Painted Stars* (1921), we have a mob of some kind appearing from behind a wooden house—but at the same time, it's emerging from the background of a scene in a wooden frame. Even the mob's animation is only an appearance, a look; words are effaced; one person in the crowd is singled out without explanation; all motion comes to a stop except for what we'd most expect to be motionless, the "still life" (*nature morte*) of flowers on wall-paper and tapestry. In translating this piece, I've stayed as close as I could to the rhythm of Reverdy's sentences, the simplicity of his diction, the strangeness of his painted scene.



Victoria Le  
Islands

Blaise Cendrars  
Iles

Islands

Islands

Islands where we will never alight our ships

Islands where we will never touch earth

Islands thick with foliage

Islands crouched like jaguars

Silent islands

Unmoving islands

Unforgettable, nameless islands

I toss my shoes overboard, because—

Because I would like to go near to you

Blaise Cendrars was a poet who must have understood, more clearly than most, the wonders and perils of the world. He lost his right arm in World War I, but continued to write (with his left hand) about his travels to Russia, China, and the Americas in long, roaming poems like “Pâques à New York” and “La Prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France.”

“Iles” was included in Cendrars’ 1924 collection *Feuilles de route*, which contains many more reminiscences of voyage and discovery. “Iles” is, in certain ways, a very straightforward poem to translate. It does not rhyme, it is not metered, and its syntax is direct and uncluttered—appealing qualities I wanted to preserve. Still, there are opportunities here to be creative. I decided on more specific imagery in the poem’s third line than is explicitly given, a move I justified given that ships are implied by the poem’s last two lines. I repeat the word “because” in the closing lines both to echo the repetition which scores the entire poem and to highlight the speaker’s emotional state: hesitation and vulnerability cut through with a frisson of implied adventure. I also settled on the particular phrasing of the last line—“I would like to go near to you”—for its elongation, reflecting the quality of cautious but hopeful understatement found in the original French.

Beyond its deft tone and evocative imagery, what specifically drew me to this poem was what occurs in the last line. To describe the islands in the poem merely as a metaphor for desire is, I think, to miss the marvel of the poem’s ending, how one image merges suddenly into another without either one actually subsuming the other. The last line of the poem does not exist to explain or justify the preceding lines; it is simply a surprising destination. In a way quite unique for both the genres of travel poetry and love poetry, this poem enacts the experience of finding oneself in a place utterly new and wondrous. The final unannounced shift stands the reader on new soil. One looks around, and everything has changed.

Leander, when he crossed the brine-dark sea,  
shipless, sailless, no oars or rowers to press,  
but naked, in the dark, in secrecy,  
was driven to an act so dangerous  
by love of Hero—she of the bright face  
who lived at Abydós, her castle home  
across the strait from his—so far, so close.

Look at the way Love drives the lover on!

That high-born braveheart swam it frequently—  
the arm of sea that lay between Hellás  
and his own home—to see her stealthily,  
hiding the way his own heart was possessed.  
But Fortune, who has done such violence  
and injury to so many a virtuous one,  
stirred up the waters to a roiling mass.

Look at the way Love drives the lover on!

So in the depth and distance of that sea  
Leander lost his life, a heavy cost.  
It dealt his lady such a blow that she  
leapt from her tower in anguish at her loss.  
Both perished in one burst of love's excess.  
See then—so that I needn't preach so long—  
all you caught up in amorous sickness:

Look at the way Love drives the lover on!

Yet I suspect that now, in our own days,  
such love as this is well and truly gone.  
But great love still makes half-wits of the wise.

Look at the way Love drives the lover on!

I first happened upon the work of Christine de Pizan for a poet's challenge, looking for a less-known woman poet to translate. I got to know her better while writing an article about her for the Mezzo Cammin Women Poets Timeline project. She lived during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, just on the cusp of the Renaissance, and she introduced her countrymen in France to the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Widowed young and forced to find a way to support a family on her own, she began writing poetry for court patrons, but she soon distinguished herself as a thinker during the *Querelle de la Rose*, the debate about the place of women in society, and she went on to write many books. She was the first European woman, as far as we know, to support herself by writing.

In translating a medieval poem for a modern audience, the first decision has to do with form. Should the translator's first concern be with making the text as attractive as possible to the widest range of readers in the target language? Or should the translator respect matters that would have been important to the poet, even at the risk of putting off some readers of the translation? Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Kevin Brownlee, in *Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan* (Norton, 1997), chose the first approach and rendered Christine's tight forms in free verse. I think there are good reasons to maintain Christine de Pizan's varying ballade forms.

First, it was important to Christine to adhere closely to the forms that were being developed and described during her early career. That adherence was part of the courtly image she needed to cultivate in order to gain and keep the patronage by which she supported herself and her family. And she loved form; in her many books of poems, she invented forms of all kinds. Second, translation in ballade form maintains the sound patterns of the original poems and gives the reader a more accurate sense of them. Though the ballade had not settled into a fixed three stanzas, eight lines each, plus *envoi*, Christine kept close to that pattern in *Cent Ballades*, and to the rhyme scheme *ab ab bc bc*, with the final *c* line repeated at the end of each stanza. The challenge of the ballade is to stick to those three rhymes only, which Christine does—in this poem, hers are *-ée*, *-age*, and *-onne*—all the while maintaining a tight, ten-syllable line. The ballade's rules are somewhat easier to keep in French, which is more rhyme-rich than English. But the translator can manage gracefully with slant rhyme, keeping the ending consonant but letting the vowel sounds

vary, as with “press” and “face.” And since in English the ballade generally uses iambic rhythms, I have turned Christine’s ten-syllable lines into iambic pentameter. Throughout, I have tried to keep to a middle style, avoiding strained syntax or archaisms.

Hey, ho Bob Marley  
O Bob Marley  
How do we stop that train?  
Stop the train!  
How do we?  
You don't know that calm woman at the piano,  
Sure she's black,  
But hey man, she's not the nice one you dreamt of, Nina Simone.  
O Nina Simone!  
This calm woman at the piano,  
She wasn't around during your time.  
(That's Condoleezza Rice)  
As for the keys, I mean the ones you might think are piano keys,  
Well, they're the gates to the kingdom of Hell.  
Hey, ho Bob Marley  
O Bob Marley  
Hey my friend  
Hey long-time friend  
Hey friend who's got songs about a continent of dreams,  
Love,  
And the prime of life,  
You won't see that lady with your own two eyes.  
You won't see how her keys come with horrifying angels,  
Or how she opens the gates of her dreams to hellhounds.  
You won't witness the storm fold up the skies of Baghdad like me.  
O Bob Marley.

London 11/18/2004

## Commentary

The poetic structure of Sa‘dī Yūsuf’s *Condoleezza Rice’s Piano*, a brazen response to the carnage that followed the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, brings to mind the defiance of early punk rock anthems. Here, I have attempted to intertextually evoke the rebelliousness of that genre by making reference to the line “Hey! Ho! Let’s go!” from the Ramones’ 1976 single “The Blitzkrieg Bop.” Yūsuf’s percussive, chopped verse bursts out onto the page somewhere between the spoken word of the Beat Generation and a three-chord progression blasting through a 1980s underground basement club. While the poet’s mention of Bob Marley and Nina Simone is explicit, I have worked to further situate his verse in a musical sphere already familiar to English-language audiences—one purposefully stripped of pretense and aimed directly against the exercise of oppressive power.

Nicholas Albertson  
Flower on a Grave

Doi Bansui

墓上の花

On a grave where rest the traces  
Of death and sadness and spite,  
One flower rests that shows a heart  
Of beauty and happiness and life.

Light, dawn, the days and years to come—  
And the flower is an image of hope;  
Dark, twilight, years gone by—  
And the grave shows traces of tears.

What is the voice of a colorful flower?  
What is the meaning of a voiceless grave?  
White dew of the same tomorrow,  
Fall on one and the other.

A grave of sorrow is the trace of a man,  
A flower of life is the work of a god;  
Light of the same evening star,  
Shine on one and the other.



Doi Bansui (1871–1952) was a poet, translator, and teacher from Sendai, Japan. “Flower on a Grave” is from his first and most famous poetry collection, *Nature Has Feelings* (*Tenchi ujō*, 1899). The poems from this collection present the translator with difficult choices in rhythm and diction. They follow a regular meter of twelve-syllable lines, with each line divided by a caesura after the seventh syllable. These alternating seven- and five-syllable units have been the building blocks of nearly all Japanese poetry since the earliest recorded works. But because the “long poem” (*chōka*) fell into disuse over a millennium ago and was only revived in the nineteenth century as a tool to translate European sonnets and odes, it was considered quite modern to write regular stanzas like these. Hence, such poems were called “new-style poetry” (*shintaiishi*).

In translating a poem like this, I feel it is important to create a more or less regular rhythm, if not a strict meter. The difficulty in adhering to meter is most acute when a particularly pithy Japanese word or phrase cannot be rendered succinctly in English, often because that word or phrase is loaded with allusions or connotations unfamiliar to English readers. Such cases are quite frequent in Bansui’s poems, which retain classical references even as they introduce European literary references into the ambit of Japanese poetry. (And while Bansui gave his readers footnotes for the European references, I try to avoid them in my translations.)

The more dangerous pitfalls are in the choice of diction. Can I make my diction sound both traditional and fresh, the way Bansui’s works did in Japanese when they were published a century ago? Should the translations sound as pleasantly dated as the originals have come to sound? It is tempting to use creative anastrophe and obsolete verbal inflections to echo Bansui’s own style—and often smooth out the rhythm at the same time—but this risks sounding too precious or pompous. I try to hear Bansui’s voice and not my own, but in practice I am simply making one choice after another, often trying to mitigate the effects of previous choices.

Roselee Bundy  
Beneath the Moss: Poems on the Death of His Wife\*

Fujiwara Shunzei

*Since the death of my companion of many years (the mother of my children) on the thirteenth day of the second month of 1193, I have endured the empty passage of months and days, until now, near the end of the sixth month, when I find myself beneath the darkening sky of dusk, alone, recalling the past. And so, I wrote,*

(172)

How bitter the cost  
Of the long years of love  
I knew with her.  
For so much harder to bear  
Is my sorrow now we are parted.

(175)

Had I a wizard  
I would send him far,  
Beyond the distant mountains  
To the very ends of the sky,  
To bring me back word of her.

(173)

In a prior life  
What were the vows of love  
We vowed to keep,  
That I should grieve her death  
As deeply as this?

(176)

While I mourned,  
Spring ended and summer too  
Draws to a close,  
But my grief is unaltered by time.  
I feel we parted today.

(174)

Now and again,  
Brief dreams that let me forget  
Restore her to me,  
Only to be woken once more  
To fresh depths of grief.

(177)

Oh, how long  
Shall I linger in this world  
To gaze at the sky  
And be moved by the sight  
Of clouds fading into dusk?

\*The translator would like to dedicate these translations to Dr. Clifton (Will) Royston, Jr., who first introduced her to Shunzei's verse, and to the memory of her late husband, Eric Darwin Hansen.

*Composed at the grave site at Hosshōji temple:*

(178)

So urgent my love,  
I made my way through the grasses,  
Seeking this field,  
Where my heart is shattered by thoughts  
Of the one beneath the moss.

(180)

There beneath the moss,  
Some trace of the soul may remain—  
Or so I've heard.  
May it let me know  
Which way she has gone.

(179)

I made my way  
Across the field of grass,  
Teardrops shattered by grief,  
But no answer does she give  
From beneath the moss.

*On the ninth day of the seventh month, an autumn day of wind and rain, my son Teika visited me, and as he was taking his leave, left a verse, describing the sorrowful scene before him. To this, I responded,*

(194)

Autumn now,  
The breeze bears with it  
An unwonted chill,  
And tears spill like dewdrops  
To scatter in its wake.

*On the thirteenth day of the second month of the following year, on the anniversary of her death, I went once more to Hosshōji. In the evening, I listened to the wind soughing through the pines and wrote,*

(197)

My heart is broken  
By the keening wind in the pines,  
This rare evening I visit,  
But ceaseless is this sound for you,  
Listening beneath the moss?

(198)

Did we ever think  
When we pledged love to endure  
For a thousand years,  
That the storm wind in the pines  
Would be the limit of our bond?

*The next day, at the gravesite,*

(199)

How long will it be  
That I come here to remember?  
For I am as well  
Destined to die and decay  
There beneath the moss.

(200)

Though I will remember,  
And yearn all my days in this world,  
It is all in vain;  
Immeasurable and without end  
The duration of the moss.

*On the thirteenth day of the second month of 1198, it being the anniversary of my wife's death, I made my way to Hosshōji and visited her gravesite and composed,*

(203)

Six years have passed  
Since that day of parting.  
Why then does she not  
Send word to let me know  
Which of the Six Paths she travels?

These fourteen, thirty-one syllable *waka* poems were composed between 1193 and 1198 to mourn the death in early spring of 1193 of Bifuku mon'in no Kaga, the wife for nearly half a century of Fujiwara Shunzei (1114–1204). Shunzei was a renowned court poet and compiler of the seventh royal collection of *waka*, *Senzaishū*, who would be long honored as the patriarch of the Mikohidari family of poets. These compositions, from Shunzei's *Chōshūsō* (Henshū Iinkai, ed. *Shinpen Kokka Taikan*, 10 vols. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1983–92), are, owing to their personal nature, simpler than many of his more formal verse. Part of their evocativeness, nonetheless, arises from Shunzei's use of the technique of allusive variation.

Composed across five years, Shunzei's poems trace the fluid, unsettled experience of loss. The poet looks back to the past for ways to explain present suffering, seeking some form of communication with the dead and reflecting on his own mortality, and finally acknowledges an insurmountable barrier between the living and the dead. Spatially, too, the verses open with the poet presumably in his own home, where he remains confined in his mourning even as exterior time passes on. Then beginning with verse 178, which speaks of a yearning that compels physical motion, he relates his several journeys to his wife's gravesite. In these latter verses, he repeatedly invokes images of the field of grass and of moss, making the latter emblematic of the ultimate separation between the living and the dead.

As is my practice, I adopted the five-line format, and although I did not try to reproduce the 5-7-5-7-7 syllable count, I attempted to maintain shorter and slightly longer lines. I preserved as well I could the order of the lines and images, believing that the sequence in which they unfold to be important. However, if the result did violence to English sense and sound, I abandoned that effort. In choosing diction, I tried to strike a balance between faithfulness to the original and overly expansive interpretation. One decision that English forces on the translator is the use of pronouns, absent from the original Japanese but, in my view, particularly justified in these personal poems. Thus I supply not only the obvious first person pronoun, but “she/her” and, in several later compositions, “you” and “we/our.” These shifts in pronouns came unbidden in my translation of these compositions, in which I felt that the bond between husband

and wife was most emphasized just as the poet recognized it had been irrevocably broken.

This set of Shunzei's compositions also displays the fruitful intersection of actual personal feeling with established forms and tropes. Shunzei writes in a poetic tradition in which diction, images, even sensibilities were severely circumscribed. Nearly every image, at times whole lines of his verses, are canonical and resonate with multiple other compositions. Rather than finding this tradition restrictive, Shunzei argued that it was in the poetic canon that the truest expressions of human feelings were preserved and that the task of the poet was to harmonize his or her voice with that chorus. In this set of poems, the poet invokes compositions from *The Tale of Genji*, so that his experience of loss summons up those of the (fictional) protagonists in that early eleventh-century tale. Shunzei's evocations of *The Tale of Genji*, as his contemporaries would have recognized, were not merely decorative but testify to Shunzei's belief in the unchanging truth of human experience and its expression through *waka*.

Specific allusions and notes:

175. In the "Paulownia Pavilion" (*Kiritsubo*) chapter of *The Tale of Genji* (Royall Tyler, tr., *The Tale of Genji* [New York: Penguin Books, 2003] 11), Genji's father, after the death of Genji's mother, wishes that there were a wizard to find her, to know where her soul has gone. Prince Genji himself will employ the same image of the wizard in a much later chapter of the tale, "The Seer" (*Maboroshi*) (Tyler, p. 776), after the death of his beloved consort Murasaki. Both poems refer back even further to Bai Juyi's "Song of Unending Sorrow," in which the Chinese emperor mourns the death of his beloved Yang Guifei.

178. This image comes from a *Genji* poem in the "Twilight Beauty" (*Yūgao*) chapter (Tyler, p. 76), which the Prince composes after the death of his lover, Yūgao.

179–80. One of Genji's lovers, in the "Under the Cherry Blossoms" (*Hana no En*) chapter (Tyler, p. 76), asks, if she were to die, if he would not seek her out, making his way through the grassy field.

204. The Six Paths refers to the six realms of karmic rebirth: hell, hungry ghosts, animals, *asura*, humans, and heavenly beings.

When you have a direction, it means that you can instantly find an old landscape amid a new one. It also means that an old position revives instantly in a new one. Therefore, when you have a direction, you're still directed to a direction set before and, even in the midst of your wandering days, your route will be always provided; even if you are amid confusion, you can hardly enjoy deviations; even if you have no definite point of departure, only your direction will exist unshakably; in spite of a severe limit to the number of your possible routes, your ultimate goal will be left ungraspable in the end; only your direction will be left intact after you disappear along with whatever has shown you which route to take.

A direction you will have will be aimlessly certain. It will never lead you to its expected end. It will end up without any breakthrough. It will keep letting you slide without going through anything. It will show you not its rear but its flanks. Then it will show you not its flanks but its front. It will continue to follow the same process without repeating anything. And, eventually, it will close completely an unmanned circle and leave your final question to the outside of its range.



Goro Takano  
Funeral Train

Yoshiro Ishihara  
葬式列車

Nobody remembers  
The name of the station the train has departed from  
Across a strange country where its right side is daytime  
And its left side is midnight  
The train keeps running  
At every station it stops  
A red lamp peeks through its windows  
And some new black masses are dumped inside  
Along with some dirty artificial legs and ragged shoes  
They all are still alive  
Even after the train starts running again  
They are still breathing  
Nevertheless  
The stench of death lies everywhere in the train  
I am also aboard it  
Every passenger looks half ghostly  
Leaning on one another  
Snuggling one another  
Still eating and drinking little by little  
But some of their buttocks are already transparent  
And on the verge of fading away  
Ah, I am also aboard with them  
Resting wistfully against the window  
Either I or my own ghost  
Starts nibbling at a rotten apple, sometimes  
Just like this, day after day  
We overlap with our own ghosts again and again  
And separate from them over and over again  
While looking forward to the day when  
The train will finally arrive at the unbearable distant future  
Who is in the engine room, anyway?  
Every time the train crosses a giant black iron bridge  
Its girders roar  
And a great number of ghosts stop eating abruptly  
And they make a brief pause  
While trying to remember  
The name of the station the train has departed from

Pain is inherent, just as death is, in your life. That's why modesty is necessary whenever you're in pain. You cannot feel anybody else's pain. Especially when pain is caused by your soul, it becomes still more inherent in you than the other cases. This particular inherency is the ultimate reason why your life in pain is doomed to be solitary. Pain always occurs with reason, and you can always seek for the very reason in everything except yourself—yes, you are allowed to do so, but, at the same time, it is nobody but you who has to be held accountable for the very pain. What is eventually left in your life as the only undeniable reason is your own vulnerability. You're the first and last master of your pain.

Pain has to be healed in the end. Healing is not a method, though. Rather, it is the purpose of pain. When you have an ache, don't forget it is an original statement of your pain. Just as your life in pain is compelled to be solitary, you're obliged to be solitary when you heal.

That's all I can say about the inherency of pain. In fact, in the process of this explanation, the importance of the word “you” has been already negligible, and your pain's resistance to healing has already been in progress. You can call it the self-assertion of pain. All things considered, the only thing left truly unchanged here is a view that the true master of this world is pain itself.

Goro Takano  
*When the World Perishes*

Yoshiro Ishihara  
世界がほろびる日に

When the world perishes  
Don't catch cold  
Beware of viruses  
Dry your futon  
By hanging it out in the sun on your veranda  
Don't forget to turn off the gas at the main  
Set the timer of your electric cooker  
For eight o'clock

Yoshiro Ishihara (石原吉郎: 1915–1977), who burst upon the scene of Japanese modern poetry in the mid-1950s, is now remembered as a “poet of silence.” During the Pacific War (1941–45), Ishihara was dispatched to the Chinese mainland as a member of the Japanese Imperial Army. Right after the war, he was taken in custody by the Russian force and imprisoned in an internment camp in Siberia until 1953. The eight years of severe hunger and hard labor influenced his life immeasurably in post-war Japan as a poet, which started in 1955.

From the 1963 publication of his first poetry collection, titled *The Homecoming of Sancho Panza*, he kept writing poems and essays prolifically, until he drowned to death at home (in the bathwater, in fact) in 1977, mainly due to excessive consumption of alcohol.

It is often said that the strength of Ishihara’s poetry lies especially in its meditative quietness devoid of grief and anger. That is partly why, some experts say, the sudden appearance of his poetics stood out amid the post-war world of Japanese poetry packed with a number of poets with war experiences. “A poem is an impulse to resist writing,” he once said, “and every word for a poem exists merely to speak about silence—or—to be silent” (Yoshiro Ishihara, “The Definition of a Poem,” in *Poems and Essays of Yoshiro Ishihara*, Tokyo: Kodan-sha, 2005, p. 11).

The biggest challenge posed by Ishihara’s texts is how to deal with the absence of subjects in several key lines of, say, “Direction” and “Pain.” The omission of subjects is not strange at all in the Japanese language, but it seemed to cause a needless lack of readability in my English translation. Thus, I tried using the pronoun “you” in those poems and attempted to make the texts more accessible to the reader.

Jennifer Carr  
BZZZ...

Boris Vian  
BZZZ...

God knew enough of hate to create flies,  
Hideous, velvety, their frightening bodies  
Swollen with yellow pus, and in their roving flight  
Trailing who knows what of foulness and blight

Spoonerizing Satan who rots all he touches  
You, flies, you touch what is rotten, tasting,  
Crowded together, the pinkish, seeping eyes  
Of beasts that your avid mouths have left blind

And your strident wing with its veins of metal  
Conjures in my nightmare a nebulous hell  
Of hairy bodies come from the shade where they pound

The nails of the long casket where I will lie down  
And which they will burn in the immortal fire  
To save me from you, when I expire...

A runt, scrawny and deformed  
Had stolen some veal without a scruple  
To eat, at the butcher's, and then a barrel  
Of wine, to drink, from the grocer at his store.

The prosecutor, what a pathetic struggle,  
Seeing in his person the latest Lucifer,  
Was after the hide of this unequaled monster.  
— He was starved! said the pragmatic counsel.

— It was Ahriman's spirit that pushed him, gentlemen!  
— No! From his stomach, those imperious strains!  
For three days they kept up the discussion.

And I left, repeating this refrain:  
Evil, did you cause the deed?  
Cause of evil, were you need?

And, uh, I still don't know.

Jennifer Carr  
Indecent<sup>1</sup> Sonnet

Boris Vian  
Indécent sonnet

Dreamer, she muses  
Through the blinds  
The rising sun  
Near her reclines

As in a vision  
I often see her  
Unnerving mirage  
Chimera, fiction

The wholesome clarity  
Of rose-hued tea  
Colors her cheek

On her uncovered  
Body the sun's cheek  
Plays an unknown lover.

<sup>1</sup> Hardly...

*Cent sonnets*—which is actually a collection of one hundred and six sonnets and six ballads—features some of the author’s earliest work. Vian wrote several of these poems while he was still a *lycéen*, and although an inescapable buoyancy pervades, they avoid juvenility and posturing, demonstrating instead a precocious dexterity and a talent for wordplay, coy allusions, and subtle (or not so subtle) changes in register. As Noël Arnaud states in his introduction to the work: “on a le sentiment que Boris Vian était bien conscient de mettre à mal la poésie” (“you get the feeling that Boris Vian was well aware of putting poetry to the test”; my translation). Not only that, but he chose the sonnet as the primary form in and through which to do so. This would have been a distinctly anachronistic gesture in the 1930s and ’40s, when Vian was writing *Cent sonnets*. After the sea changes of Dada and Surrealism, rhymed, metered verse could have easily become yet another ossified strata of literary tradition. Yet Vian’s poetry was to be both contrary and prescient. To turn once more to Arnaud’s introduction: “Il s’en faudra de quelques années pour que l’Oulipo réussisse à réhabiliter la poétique ancienne ... et parvienne à convaincre de l’intérêt, sinon de la nécessité, des structures et des contraintes dans la production littéraire” (“It would be several years before the Oulipo succeeded in rehabilitating traditional poetics ... and managed to convince people of the relevance, if not the necessity, of structures and constraints in literary production”; my translation). (*Cent Sonnets*, Livre de poche, 2009: 8–9).

The translator of Vian’s poems is certainly constrained, or at the very least conflicted. Respecting, as far as possible, the dictates of the sonnet and ballad forms would appear necessary, yet adherence to form inevitably entails sacrifices elsewhere. There are no empirical measures available to the translator; nothing to indicate how much of a divergence is too much. In a sense, translation is nothing more—and nothing less—than an exercise in individual taste. However, if, for the sake of establishing some parameters, we were to define the two poles of poetry translation as, say, Robert Lowell’s *Imitations* and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Eugene Onegin*, then I have done a somewhat messy job of furrowing out the middle ground. As a general rule, though, I did try to preserve some semblance of a rhyme scheme, even when this meant tweaking the meter and syntax.

Vian is also adept at various kinds of wordplay. Consider for instance



the neologism *contrepettant* in “Bzz...,” which takes the French word for “spoonerism,” *contrepet*, and turns it into a present participle by affixing a final *-ant*. I translated this term—which anticipates the deft inversion of the phrases *pourrit ce qu’il touche ... touchez ce qui pourrit* (“rots all he touches ... touch what is rotten”; my translation)—using the equivalent English suffix, “-ing.” Both *contrepettant* and “spoonerizing” have four syllables, which works nicely for the meter, but the internal “an” rhyme of *contrepettant Satan* is lost.

One final consideration worth mentioning stems from Vian’s penchant for footnoting or otherwise attaching “addenda” to his poems. These present a singular challenge: how would the translator distinguish her own (should she feel the need to include any) from those integral to the original? I could easily picture the nightmarish succession of footnotes and footnotes to footnotes that would result, and so decided to avoid adding any of my own, even when I suspected that something wanted elucidating. Yet *Cent sonnets*’s footnotes and addenda can also be understood as subversions of French poetic tradition and its centuries of baggage. So I chose to reason—however self-servingly—that this irreverence, typical of Vian, allows the translator that much more creative leeway.

Rebekah Wilson  
*At the End of Time*

Rose Ausländer  
*Am Ende der Zeit*

Say the war is over  
at the end of time  
we shall

go walking again  
down mussel shell alley  
all right  
with this person and that person

It will be nice if—  
it will be

at the end of time

Rebekah Wilson  
To Say Dark Things

Ingeborg Bachmann  
Dunkles zu sagen

Like Orpheus, I play  
death on the strings of life,  
and in the beauty of the earth  
and your eyes, which govern the heavens,  
I can only say dark things.

Don't forget how, all of a sudden,  
on that morning when your camp  
was still wet with dew and the carnation  
lay asleep on your heart,  
you too saw the dark river  
flowing by.

The string of silence  
pulled taut on the wave of blood,  
I grasped your sounding heart.  
Your curls were turned  
into the night's hair of shadows,  
black flakes of darkness  
fell on your face.

And I don't belong to you.  
We lament both now.

But like Orpheus I know  
life strung on the side of death  
and your eyes, closed forever,  
are blue to me.

Rebekah Wilson  
If Only I Knew

Nelly Sachs  
Wenn ich nur wüßte

If only I knew  
what the last thing you saw was.  
Was it a stone, that had drunk in  
countless last looks, until, in blindness,  
they fell on the blind?

Or was it earth,  
enough to fill a shoe,  
and already black  
from so many partings  
and causing so much death?

Or was it your final path,  
bringing you farewells from all the paths  
you had ever walked?

A puddle, a reflection in metal,  
perhaps your enemy's buckle,  
or some other small interpreter  
of heaven?

Or did this earth,  
which lets no one depart from here unloved,  
send you a bird omen through the air,  
reminding your soul that it flinched  
in its pain-scorched body?

When I came to translate Ausländer's poem "Am Ende der Zeit," I felt that one of its key features was its ambiguity. The word *wenn* is ambiguous, meaning as it does both "when" and "if" in German. I tried to overcome this problem in the first stanza as follows: "Say the war is over / at the end of time / we shall," followed by "go walking again / down mussel shell alley" in the second stanza. "Say the war is over ... we shall / go walking again" incorporates the idea of "if," while "Say the war is over / at the end of time / we shall" incorporates the idea that, "at the end of time, we shall say the war is over." I chose to translate the title, which occurs twice in the body of the poem, as "At the end of time," since the phrase "the end of days" (*aharit ha-yamim*, אחרית הימים) appears several times in the Tanakh, and Ausländer's Jewish heritage was a focal point of her work.

"Dunkles zu sagen" was apparently written about Paul Celan, with whom Ingeborg Bachmann had a relationship. I enjoyed translating it because I found it moving. I tried to stay close to the source text while retaining the terseness of phrase. I also tried to reproduce style elements because they represent choices by the poet, and as such are important to me too as a reader. The alliteration of *Saite* and *Schweigens* in the third stanza was fairly straightforward to reproduce (with "string" and "silence"); the half-rhyme of *Locke/Flocken* and the alliteration of *Finsternis/Flocken* less so. I went for internal rhyme in "curls" and "turned," repetition of the "k" sound in "black flakes of darkness," and the alliteration of "flakes," "fell" and "face." I found it difficult to incorporate the "snowed" of *beschneiten*, but hoped that "flakes fell" went some way towards this. It was hard to capture the wordplay of *Saite* and *Seite*, but in the last stanza I went for "life strung on the side of death."

"Wenn ich nur wüßte" ("If Only I Knew") is a very sad poem. I found the opening line very moving and powerful. Nelly Sachs (1891–1970) was born in Berlin to Jewish parents. She fled to Sweden in 1940 with her mother one week before she was scheduled to report to a concentration camp. In 1960, she suffered a nervous breakdown accompanied by acute paranoia. In 1966, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Some critics attribute the lack of aestheticisation in Sachs' work to the inappropriateness of aestheticisation in any discussion of Auschwitz. For this reason, I avoided poetic devices such as rhyme. This also made it easier to stick to the original text. It is interesting that

each stanza is a question and ends with a question mark, thus reinforcing the sentiment of “not knowing” as expressed in the title.

Leanne Ogasawara  
Geta

Takamura Kōtarō  
下駄

All that can be seen are the ground, the doorway, and boxes of *senbei* crackers  
Seen from out the window of a street car, stopped along a narrow street  
It's only a shabby little cracker shop  
And left there in the doorway are three pairs of *geta*  
One of them tiny *geta* with red straps  
Brand new  
And placed there with such care  
Warmed in the winter's morning sun

Leanne Ogasawara  
My House

Takamura Kōtarō  
わが家

The soaring roof of my house cuts into the sky above  
And there below, seven windows  
A small bay window lets in the morning sun  
Bathed in the bright red light of the summer mist  
Looking up to the top of the tall zeklova tree  
A sparrow is singing  
And there below the bay window  
Three steps  
And leading from those steps, a road

The cherry leaves, wet in the dew  
Are lit up and scattering silently  
Cherry trees stretching their arms  
Dark green, are not yet awake  
The sky is a deepening shade of blue  
Its brightness inexpressible  
The summer morning sunlight  
Soundlessly  
Stealthily lights up the road  
And stepping out onto the road  
Covered in mist  
The road bends



Leanne Ogasawara  
Bowling Low (*The Promulgation of the Constitution*)

Takamura Kōtarō  
土下座

Carried on someone's back  
The hill in Ueno was buried under a crowd of people.  
Over their heads, I saw  
The two lines of cavalrymen, advancing  
Down the center of the snowy road, cleared of all people.  
And still carried on someone's back  
We somehow broke through the crowd to the very front  
Where I was lowered to the ground  
Everyone bowed low  
Foreheads to the ground in reverence.  
The horses kicked up the snow in front of my head  
Several carriages passed, and then came more cavalrymen  
Carrying the Imperial flags, held high  
And in the carriage that followed  
I saw the figures of two people  
When, at that moment, my head was pushed down hard toward the ground  
“Otherwise you'll go blind,” the voice said.  
And I smelled gravel wet with snow.

The sculptor and poet Takamura Kōtarō (高村光太郎 1883–1956) is best known in Japan for his *Chieko Poems* (智恵子抄), which are a chronicle documenting the evolution of the poet's relationship with his wife as well as a celebration of his love for her. While it is for the *Chieko Poems* for which Kōtarō remains famous, it was his first anthology *Dōtei* (道程) that probably had the most significant literary impact. The son of a famous sculptor, Kōtarō traveled to Europe to study art in 1906. Studying in London and Paris, he returned back to Japan in 1909 and began working on what was Japan's first poetry volume written in the Western free-verse style. Published in 1914, *Dōtei* (*Journey*) had a profound influence. "Geta" and "My House" came out not long after the publication of the *Dōtei* anthology. While at first glance, the poems might not appear particularly unorthodox, they were in fact revolutionary for the time; for despite the traditional themes, the vernacular voice and poetic free-verse form were brand new in Japan. In "Geta," *senbei* are rice crackers and *geta* are a form of traditional footwear.

The final poem, "Bowing Low," was written at the end of his career, in *A Brief History of Imbecility*. This collection was written after Chieko's death, when Kotaro was already quite famous. Composed in Hanamaki, in Iwate Prefecture, where he had evacuated and spent the war years, the book would undergo harsh criticism because of Kōtarō's wartime artistic contributions and nationalism. In addition to its historical context, the poem is also interesting from a translation point of view.

We know from the title that the context is the promulgation ceremony of the Meiji Constitution. With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, political power was handed back over to a Japanese emperor for the first time in 1,000 years—and this was Japan's first-ever constitution. The promulgation ceremony itself took place on February 11, 1889 and was celebrated throughout the country. Many Western dignitaries were invited to the banquet, which was held in the newly constructed Western style *Rokumeikan* (Deer Cry Hall) in Tokyo. And, after reading aloud the new constitution, the Emperor and Empress then rode out to the Aoyama Parade Ground to attend a military parade before riding out in the streets. The night before, it had snowed, but despite the cold, crowds of people turned out to line the streets where the emperor would pass.

It is in this crowd that the "I" of the poem—a child, carried on "some-

one's back" finds himself pushed right to the front of the crowd. As the carriage approaches, everyone bows low in reverence. This word "reverence" was not in the original Japanese poem. But the word *dogesa* signifies bowing down to the ground, to prostrate oneself in reverence, although several translators have taken this verb in the sense of "to kowtow." I would argue that the child is not being ordered by soldiers or guards with swords to "show submission and bow down," but is rather being pushed down by a relative, who is the one who says, "if you look at the emperor, you'll go blind." The Emperor was considered to be descended from a god, and in what is probably a universal sensibility, to look at a god can cause blindness.

In addition to the poem having punctuation and the use of the formal pronoun *watakushi* for "I" (both these things being somehow modern and Western-style feeling), another interesting challenge to this poem was the last two lines. In Japanese, one can play with word order in very creative ways not available to us in English. Often this is done to emphasize something. For my English translation, I could have very well kept to the Japanese order of, "Otherwise you'll go blind" for that last line (and readers may have different opinions about what works here). In the end, I decided to retain the English logic. That is, he was pushed down to show reverence and no longer able to see, he smells the "gravel wet with snow."

1. I open a door  
at my neighbor's camp  
and a woman offers me  
a piece of fish.  
I open another  
and I am offered  
a piece of meat.  
At a third door  
a woman shares her meal  
with me.

2. I open a door  
at my own camp  
and a woman offers me  
a piece of bread.  
I open another  
and I am offered  
a piece of a pie.  
At a third door  
a woman milks a cow  
for me.

3. I open a door  
in a neighboring village  
and a woman offers me  
a mug of beer.  
I open another  
and I am offered  
a shot of vodka.  
At a third door  
a woman arranges  
a drinking party  
for my birthday.

4. I open a door  
in my own village  
and a woman suggests  
a drink for “the morning after.”  
I open another  
and a woman suggests  
we drink to her latest purchase.  
At a third door  
a woman suggests  
we kill the bottle.

5. Will I ever manage  
to return  
to the beginning of the journey?

Yuri Kilevich Vaella (Aivaseda) was born in the village of Varyogan in West Siberia in 1948. He is of the taiga Nenets people, who historically lived along the Pur River. During the Civil War of 1918–19, however, growing increasingly destitute, the Nenets moved south from the tundra to the Agan River in the taiga forest and adopted the culture of the Khanty “reindeer people.” Aivaseda takes his pseudonym—*Vaella*—from an ancient taiga Nenets clan.

Vaella’s first teacher was his grandmother, who introduced him to the oral tradition. As a teenager, Vaella spent a number of years in a boarding school, and then went into the army, working as a carpenter. In the 1980s, he studied creative writing at the Moscow State Literary University. He began to publish in 1988, writing poetry, short stories, and sketches in both Nenets and Russian. A reindeer owner who spends most of his time in his ancestral deer-camp grounds, Vaella is the head of the Association of Private Reindeer Owners. His stand against the oil industry invasion of his native territorial grounds has always been strident. In 1989 he organized the first picket line among Khanty hunters to protest the encroachment of the oil barons. In his native village of Varyogan he established the Museum of Traditional Culture of the Taiga People.

Vaella has written and published poems, essays, and folktales and recorded folksongs. His poetry appears in the leading Russian literary magazines. His volume of collected poems, *White Cries*, was published in Surgut in 1996, followed by three more books of prose and poetry. Some of his works have been translated into English, Hungarian, German, French, Finnish, Estonian and, recently, into some Muslim languages of Siberia.

The present poem is from his latest book in Russian, *Threads of Kinship* (*Novoagansk*, 2010), which Alexander Vaschenko and I were in the process of translating into English, before his passing this June. The method employed on this translation was typical of our long-time artistic collaboration: Vaschenko provided me with rough English versions from the Russian, and I polished them with an eye to the line lengths and an ear to the rhythm. My colleague at Ohio Northern University, Jim Walter, was also helpful in questions of detail with respect to the nuances of the Russian.

Susan McLean  
A Woman

Heinrich Heine  
Ein Weib

Their love was fervent and from the heart—  
he was a thief, and she, a tart.  
When he had roguish tricks to play,  
she leapt into bed and laughed away.

They passed the day in sweet delight;  
she lay against his chest at night.  
As he was taken to jail to pay,  
she stood at the window and laughed away.

He sent her word: “Oh, come to me!  
I’m longing for you ardently.  
I pine; I call for you and pray.”  
She shook her head and laughed away.

At six a.m., he was hanged till dead;  
at seven, laid in an earthen bed.  
But she, already at eight that day,  
drank red wine and laughed away.

Susan McLean  
The Cat

Charles Baudelaire  
Le Chat

My lovely cat, come, sheathe your claws;  
on my enamored heart lie prone  
and let me plumb your gorgeous eyes,  
where metal's sheen meets agate's stone.

While my fingers leisurely  
caress your head and supple back,  
sensing your body's energy  
with each intoxicated stroke,

I see my mistress in my heart.  
Like yours, my charming beast, her gaze,  
profound and cold, cuts like a dart,

and from her, head to foot, there strays  
a faint perfume, a subtle hint  
of her dark body's dangerous scent.



When rising from your chair, I've often noticed,  
    you're buggered, Lesbia, by your wretched dress.  
You tug with your right and left hand till you free it,  
    blubbering and moaning with distress.  
It's held so by your ass's Clashing Rocks  
    as it enters where your massive buttocks meet.  
Would you correct this ugly fault? Here's how:  
    neither stand up, I'd say, nor take a seat.

You want to be a free man? You're a liar,  
    Maximus; you don't. But if you do,  
here's how: if you can give up dining out,  
    if Veii's grape subdues your thirst, if you  
can laugh at wretched Cinna's gold-trimmed dishes  
    and wear togas like mine contentedly,  
if you use two-bit whores and can't stand straight  
    while entering your home, you will be free.  
If you've the strength of will to face such things,  
    you'll live a freer man than Parthia's kings.

For “A Woman” I wished to reproduce the short lines and tight rhyme scheme of this poem and to use a bouncy iambic tetrameter for ironic contrast to the cynicism of the content. The challenge in translating this poem is to get “laughed” at the end of each stanza, although the word has few useful rhymes in English. As the man’s situation becomes direr, the woman’s laugh seems more heartless. By using “laughed away” instead, I opened up a wider range of possible rhymes and suggested continuing laughter. *Spitzbüb*in can mean “swindler” or “hussy,” but the reference to “bed” in stanza one suggested to me that the sexual nature of the deceit should be emphasized. Similarly, *Schelmenstreiche* or “roguish tricks” could refer to the man’s thieving, but if the woman is throwing herself on the bed in the next line, it could also be a euphemism for sexual activity. In the last stanza, “at six,” “at seven,” and “at eight” set up an inexorable progression of events, so I wished to make the sequence parallel to emphasize that.

In “The Cat” I chose to make the lines all iambic tetrameter, instead of alternating ten syllables and eight syllables as Baudelaire does. Alternating lines of pentameter and tetrameter would have come close to Baudelaire’s approach, but that particular pattern is quite rare in English, and I felt more comfortable sticking with all-tetrameter lines. Shorter lines tend to sound more lyrical; longer ones, more talky. The lyrical mode seemed to fit this poem better. I did mix perfect rhymes with slant rhymes as a way of suggesting the slightly off-balance quality of the French lines, while also enabling me to stick closer to the meaning than I would with only perfect rhymes. French verse counts syllables, but English meter is stress-based. I used iambic tetrameter, which has four stresses per line, but can vary in syllable count from seven to nine. To avoid monotony in iambic verse, it is essential to vary the meter reasonably often with pauses created by punctuation within the line and with occasional metrical substitutions, such as a trochee (a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable) in place of an iamb (at the beginning of line seven and after the first comma in line eleven); a headless iamb (one that lacks the unstressed syllable, such as the one at the beginning of line five); a double iamb (two unstressed syllables followed by two stressed syllables, as at the beginning of line fourteen); or an anapest (two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable, in the last foot of the last line). The substitutions make the verse more conversational, but also

more musical. Although at the beginning of line seven “and sense” would be closer to the French wording than “sensing” is, the latter creates a more elegant rhythm in the line without changing the meaning significantly.

For Martial 11.99 I have made small changes such as calling a tunic a “dress” and conflating the names “Symplegades” and “Cyanean Rocks” into the better-known term “Clashing Rocks,” which describes what the legendary rocks did. While that change loses the comically inflated diction, it gains intelligibility to contemporary readers. I have dropped the repetition of Lesbia’s name as unnecessary, and have added rhyme in alternate lines to add impact to the jokes. Part of the humor of the poem lies in the contrast between the erudite mythical references (Clashing Rocks) and the coarse humor of the obscene terms (*culi* for “ass” and *pedicant* for “bugger”), as well as the impossibility of Martial’s proposed solution for Lesbia’s problem.

Martial 2.53 alludes to the Roman client-patron relationship, in which poor men would dance attendance on wealthy patrons in order to be rewarded with a small monetary dole, invitations to dinner, and gifts at holidays. The first line might suggest that Maximus is a slave who wants to be free, but the facts that he drinks wine, pays prostitutes, and has his own home suggest that he is merely poor. Martial consistently refers to the wine of Veii as a cheap wine, and its undesirability can be inferred from the context. The name “Cinna” is not meant to refer to a specific individual (Martial denies that he targets actual people in his epigrams). “Cinna” is just a common Roman name, and rich showoffs of this sort would have been equally common. Martial often jokes about his own poverty, as in his self-deprecatory allusion to his inferior toga. *Venus* in the seventh line of the Latin does not refer here to the goddess of love; instead the word is used metaphorically to denote a sex partner, in this case a whore. I have omitted an equivalent for *plebeia* (meaning “common”) because *gemino asse* (“two coins of low value”), which I translated as “two-bit,” suggests that the whore is both cheap and common. Parthia, a Near Eastern country that traditionally was Rome’s enemy, was known for its luxury. Martial does not rhyme (nor did other poets of his time) but English light verse traditionally does rhyme, and the rhymes add punch to the jokes. I tend to rhyme every other line, however, to keep the need to rhyme from distorting the meaning much. I end with a rhymed couplet to add closure. Martial’s poem is written in elegiac couplets, in which a line of dactylic hexameter is followed by one of dactylic

pentameter. But dactylic meter is rare in English, and hexameters tend to drag, so I have written the whole poem in iambic pentameter, which better fits the rhythms of English and sounds natural and conversational.

Daryl Maude  
Cat

Yamanokuchi Baku  
猫

Kicked  
Flying into the sky  
Over the people  
Over the tree tops  
Even over the moon  
And if it reaches the throne of God  
It won't fall down, a beast so light,  
Completely ignoring how high it should be  
Landing on the ground and walking on these four legs.

Daryl Maude  
Heads

Yamanokuchi Baku  
首

Someone I'd just met,  
While having a drink  
Cocked their head and said  
Are you Baku-san, the poet?  
I am surprised  
The Baku-san I see in your poems  
Is nothing like the gentleman I see before me.  
I shrugged without thinking  
And then raised my head and said  
Of the old Baku you see in the poems and  
The gentleman Baku you see here—  
Who is the real Baku, I wonder?  
At which the person looked up  
And said Well, I'm not sure  
And—maybe because something was wrong with their neck—  
Cocked their head again

Daryl Maude  
It Takes All Sorts

Yamanokuchi Baku  
世はさまざま

People eat rice  
And my namesake  
the monster called the *baku*  
Eats dreams, they say  
Sheep will eat paper  
And bedbugs come to suck blood  
And there are people  
Who come in to eat people, and people who go out to eat people  
And, thinking about it, in my homeland of Ryukyu  
There is a tree called the *umumā*  
For a tree it looks ugly, but it is like a poet:  
Standing in graveyards,  
Growing on the tears and sad voices of  
The people who come and cry.  
A strange tree, the *umumā*.

There in the gardens, always  
The *tauchī* fighting cocks are thirsty for blood  
Each *tauchī*  
In his own *mībārā*,\* but  
All of them squaring their shoulders  
So much confidence  
Growing tired of waiting for the fight day  
Each morning at the Akamine house, *Tanmē*-grandpa  
Carrying a tobacco tray  
Comes out onto the veranda and sits  
Enquires after the health of the *tauchī* in the garden  
This morning *Tanmē* was on the veranda but  
Maybe his pipe was blocked?  
And at the tap-tap of him hitting it  
The *tauchī*, to a bird,  
Suddenly stretched their necks

\*A cage for raising chickens

Yamanokuchi Baku (山之口貊, 1903–1963) was an Okinawan poet and writer of fiction and essays. As a young man, he left his homeland in the southern Ryukyuan archipelago, which had been annexed by Japan and renamed as Okinawa in 1879, and moved to Tokyo, the metropolitan centre of the Japanese Empire. Yamanokuchi Baku, whose real name was Yamaguchi Jūsaburō, took his pen-name, Baku—by which he is known to Japanese readers—from the mythical beast which was supposed to feed on nightmares.

Baku's work avoids complex imagery and flowery expressions and instead uses stark, simple language. His subject matter ranges from everyday encounters with people in bars, or conversations with his wife about money, to descriptions of his Okinawan homeland or meditations on his own identity as Okinawan. In metropolitan Tokyo, Okinawans were the subject of much prejudice, being seen as exotic and primitive. Baku, like many others, had to endure the problem of worrying about how best to explain himself and his origins to other people. In his most well-known poem, “A Conversation” (“Kaiwa”), he describes being asked by a woman “Where are you from?” He imagines describing his homeland, with its sub-tropical plants and different customs, and the inevitable stereotypes of a land of “indigo seas” and “everlasting summer” that will arise in the woman's mind. The poem, like much of Baku's work, is wryly humorous, but has a dark, serious core—unwilling to tell her directly that he is Okinawan, the poet is forced to become increasingly circuitous about how he presents his identity. Another example of Baku's dark humor can be seen in “It Takes All Sorts,” in which he likens poets to the legendary *umumā* tree, which feasts on people's sadness, at once poking fun at himself and also questioning the ethics of his art.

Translation of Baku's poetry is challenging due to this wry humor injected into many of the lines, and also due to the simplicity and strong sense of rhythm of his writing has. Japanese often leaves out the subject of a sentence when it is thought to be known to all parties, and so when translating poems I have tried to replicate the clipped, concise effect of the original as much as possible, while still rendering the poems intelligible for English speakers by inserting pronouns, or naming the speaker of a particular line. While I never had to worry about translating complicated sentences or rendering obscure metaphors in intelligible English, trying to replicate Baku's short sentences and also



deal with his sparse use of punctuation—which I have tried to follow as much as possible—was a challenge. When I showed my translations to two Okinawan friends, they tried to retranslate the works from English back into Japanese in a sparing, funny, Baku-esque fashion. “No, no,” one would say to the other. “Simpler! Say it like Baku-san would!”

The title of the poem “Heads” is “Kubi” in the original Japanese, a word which can refer to either the head or the neck, depending on its context. Some people may find the use of “their” jarring as a third-person singular pronoun, but in the original the gender of the other speaker is unspecified, and could equally be female or male. I decided to retain this ambiguity. Another problem in translating his poetry is Baku’s use of *Uchināguchi*, or Okinawan language, as in “Okinawan Scene.” Inserted in the Japanese text, the Okinawan words are sometimes in *katakana*, the script often used for loanwords in Japanese, and sometimes in *kanji*, or Chinese characters. Baku’s *kanji*, while readily readable to a Japanese-speaking audience, are glossed with nonstandard, Okinawan pronunciations above them in *katakana*, making them sound different. When translating the poem into English, I have tried to keep the *Uchināguchi* words intact, adding on English words afterwards with hyphens to try to replicate the experience of reading a familiar word along with an unfamiliar one. I have also kept the asterisk footnote in which Baku explains what a *mībārā* is.

He was, more or less, wasting time  
he drew a vase  
he drew a flower in the vase  
and fragrance emanated from the paper.  
He drew a cup of water  
took a sip  
and watered the flower.  
He drew a room  
placed a bed in the room  
and fell asleep  
...and when he woke up  
he drew a sea  
a deep sea  
and drowned.

## Commentary

Wadih Saadeh (1948–) is a Lebanese poet who left his native country during the Civil War to reside in Australia with his family. His poetry is marked by a sense of loss and exile. His poem, “A Life,” articulates the condition of exile in which the poet (and as a matter of fact, any human being) suffers. The art (and the world) a poet creates serves as a dwelling that ultimately doubles his alienation from the outside world. “A Life” conveys beautifully the doubling of the artist’s exilic condition. Its sound devices in Arabic conveying the depth of the artist’s exile through the deep sound of the letter *ق* recurring in the words *عميق*, *غرق*, *ورقة* are reincarnated in English as the consonance in “deep” and “asleep” on one hand, and the “w” and “d” sounds in “deep,” “drew,” and “drowned” on the other hand, highlighting the fact that the artist is both victim and agent of his exile.

Erik Lofgren  
Untitled (2 October 1910)

Natsume Sōseki  
[SZ12:407]

In dream, I wander the cosmos; a profoundly silent dew-fall glistens.  
At midnight, my body and its shadow in the flame's pathetic gloom.  
Ill in this inn with Shuzenji temple nearby—  
Through the curtained window, its faintly sounding bell; long, now, into autumn.

Erik Lofgren  
Untitled (6 October 1910)

Natsume Sōseki  
[SZ12:408]

The world is ever uncertain,  
And ever are we at the mercy of its winds.  
Under a clear autumn sky, we lament our greying sidelocks;  
Our disease-ravaged bodies dream the flush face of youth.  
I see the birds off across the limitless sky  
And watch the clouds on their endless paths.  
I am but bones, yet precious they are,  
And careful I'll be not to grind them down.

Erik Lofgren  
Untitled (7 October 1910)

Natsume Sōseki  
[SZ12:408]

How melancholy the arrival of autumn!  
Vomiting blood, yet still this body lives.  
How long ere I might arise from my sickbed?  
The village, aglow in the setting sun.

All three poems here are taken from *Sōseki zenshū* (1967) and represent Natsume Sōseki's (1867–1916) return, after a ten-year hiatus, to *kanshi* (poems in the classical Chinese style). They date from a time when Sōseki, perhaps Japan's most famous early-modern author, was recovering from a near-fatal illness brought on by a journey undertaken to recuperate from an earlier serious illness. Consequently, the twin themes of life's ephemerality and man's relation to his world define these poems. The degree of lachrymose pathos is, perhaps, overwrought; however, the poems do offer a refraction of the mind of a convalescent and, as such, join a long history of writing that crosses many national and periodization boundaries. Through recourse to this neglected part of Sōseki's *oeuvre* we gain another view of a complex and highly influential novelist.

One of the primary difficulties facing the translator of *kanshi*—or, indeed, classical Chinese poetry on which *kanshi* are putatively modeled—is the frustration of plenitude that lies at the confluence of concision, evocative power, and a vibrant intertextuality. This plenitude may be addressed in numerous ways: explanatory footnotes, descriptive text inserted in the poem proper, through a discursive essay, or the translator may choose to let the poem stand on its own. It is this last that I have chosen, for the possibility of deeper awareness inheres, however tentatively, in the shared context of the three poems.

Nobody familiar with classical Chinese poetry will be surprised to learn that extensive commentary has grown up around the fertile ground of Sōseki's *kanshi*. What is, perhaps, troubling for the translator is how much of this commentary seeks to rewrite the poems in the image of the putatively real. For example, in the first poem (2 October 1910), Iida Rigyō (*Shin'yaku Sōseki shishū* [Tokyo: Kashiwa shobō, 1994]: 153–54) has drawn upon Sōseki's use of the temple Shuzenji, plus Sōseki's contemporaneous writings, to expand upon the poem. He observes that the bell should actually be thought of as “drum” for two reasons. The first is because Shuzenji did not construct a bell until the Taishō era (1912–26) so there was no bell tower on the premises at the time Sōseki was writing. Second, Sōseki described the evening in question in *Omoidasu koto nado* (*Recollections*, 1910) saying, “At that moment, the drum of Shuzenji sounded.” Yet, to accept this attribution of intention, however accurate the facts upon which it is based might be, is to deny the poem and its poet the freedom of

creative fancy, and the power of image. The fact is that Sōseki chose to use “bell” instead of “drum” and in the poem, there is no indication that a reader was to understand the choice in any other way. Note that I am not suggesting the poem must remain true to the author’s intention; rather, that in the absence of any evidence in the poem to the contrary, changing the text to match an assumed knowledge of the reality surrounding the poem’s construction, as many of the commentators feel obliged to do, beggars the immanent power of the poem.

Once the determination was made to present the poems as free from this biographical armature as possible, the other decisions facing the translator fell into place. While neither foot nor meter, as they are understood in Western poetry, play a significant role, *kanshi* is governed by a strict syllable count (each character representing one syllable) and rhyme scheme. In most published English translations of *kanshi*, these have both been ignored, generally to the benefit of the translation. I have followed the lead of others translating *kanshi* and have set aside the strict rhyme scheme present in the originals as too disruptive of a natural flow to warrant strict adherence.

If it be true in nightly haze  
When all the living lay in repose  
And from the heavens lunar rays  
Slither among the graves and their stones,  
If it be true that one would say  
That the quiet tombs have been unmade—  
I call Leila; I await that shade:  
To me, my friend, this way, this way!

Appear once more, shade whom I adore,  
Like the day you left and were all the while  
Wan and cold as the winter you wore  
When all those terminal woes warped your smile.  
Come, like a distant star far away,  
Like a soft sound or exhaled emission—  
Or like a terrible apparition.  
Any way at all: this way, this way!...

I call you not so that you might  
Upbraid those men whose malicious ways  
Took the life of my friend that night,  
Or to learn the secrets of these graves,  
Or for the times when I would lay  
All racked with doubt...Rather, I have pined  
Wishing to say that I love in kind,  
For I'm all yours: this way, this way!

I felt that finding the proper refrain for this poem proved to be the hardest and most crucial aspect of a proper translation. Despite its deceptively simple quality, its nuances support the main crux of the poem: the speaker's coming "hither" represents not only his invocation of his lost beloved, but also his approaching of the addressee in space and in form.

I also strove to preserve the rhyme and a syllabic meter. The poem does, however, diverge from the eight- and nine-syllable line schema in the second stanza. The change in meter, in addition to the alliteration of a distinctly non-Russian sound, disconnected the stanza from the rest of the poem just enough to support the scholarly speculation concerning its apocryphal nature.

Perhaps the most remarkable sonic feature of the Russian pertains to the assonance of the *u* sound (e.g. лунные лучи, line 3 and сюда, сюда, line 8). While replicating the exact sound might unnecessarily bridle the poem, I opted for the similarly melancholic repetition of the *ei* sound, scattered throughout the translation (e.g. "haze," "way," and "shade").

Though the use of the colon and dash in the English translation was unconventional, I felt the need to preserve them, as the colon seemed to signal the speaker's direct speech while the dash served as a prolonged pause. Rather than rely upon quotation marks and commas to fulfill those roles, I felt that the dashes, colons, ellipses, and exclamations offered a particular visual importance, reinforcing the concept of bodies in repose, atop one another, among graves, and standing erect, respectively.

I did divert from using the any of the previous translations of the title, such as "Invocation" or "Incantation." Though one sense of the term, "invocation," does apply to the poem, I felt that some of its more immediate connotations do not. Furthermore, although there is certainly a kind of conjuring at work, the use of "incantation" might have limited the poem's interpretation in a single direction. Therefore, after considering Russian and English etymologies and uses of the term, I settled upon "adjuration" for its ability to speak to both the fantastical and temporal elements within the poem.



Khenifra, Morocco, July 2002

A clay-red town, its skies crisscrossed by storks.  
The sandlot is barely lit by the flickering streetlights.  
We approach, they play on;  
one of them goes to find us some chairs,  
another gives us some tea...  
They play well; I didn't dare join.

And then the *muezzin* broke into his piercing lament  
of hope and mercy;  
a big rug was quickly spread out,  
and from a water bottle the hands and faces were purified.  
I turned and I saw them, these players,  
lined up in prayer, in the offering of their game,  
in the communion of their lives.  
I joined my hands together and cried.

## Commentary

Emmanuel Verot is a high school mathematics teacher in Béziers, southern France. He writes poems from time to time as the occasion arises, but has never tried to publish his work. He was raised in Casablanca, Morocco, where he was born in 1952 to a family of French Huguenot heritage; his father was a music teacher from near Bordeaux, and his mother was from Pau. Verot grew up speaking both French and Arabic.

A small challenge in this translation was to clarify points that might puzzle an English reader unfamiliar with Morocco. For instance, I used “clay-red town” to translate Verot’s *ville rouge* (red town), a reference to the color of traditional dwellings in towns such as Khenifra that are “dug into” the red-mountain portion of the Middle Atlas.

*Pétanque* is a lawn-bowling game of southern France that was introduced to Morocco by French colonials. The game is familiar to many outside of France and Morocco, partly because it was immortalized in the stories of Marcel Pagnol; I decided to leave the title in French. For American readers, “sandlot” works well for *terrain vague*, literally “waste lot”; in Khenifra there is no grass, and the game is played instead on fields of bare dirt. I chose to echo the word “join,” which appears in the last line of each stanza and makes a point of contrast: as an outsider, the poet dares not join the game he sees being played before him, yet he feels an overpowering emotional tie to the men as they halt their game in prayer.



## Notes on Contributors

Nicholas Albertson recently completed his dissertation on Japanese Romantic poetry of the Meiji period (1868–1912) at the University of Chicago. While in graduate school, he conducted research on Doi Bansui (1871–1952) at Tōhoku University in Sendai. In fall 2013, he will take up a teaching post at Smith College, in his hometown of Northampton, MA.

Dan Bellm is a poet and translator living in Berkeley, California, and the recipient of a 2013 Literature Fellowship in Translation from the National Endowment for the Arts. He has also published three books of poetry, most recently *Practice* (Sixteen Rivers Press), winner of a 2009 California Book Award. He teaches literary translation at Antioch University Los Angeles and at New York University.

Roselee Bundy is Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Kalamazoo College. She has published a number of studies on the poet Fujiwara Teika and the poetry of the *Shinkokin* period, including “Solo Poetry Contest as Poetic Self Portrait: The One-Hundred-Rounds of Lord Teika’s Own Poems,” in *Monumenta Nipponica* (2006). More recently, she has turned to issues of gender in Heian *utaawase* and other texts and has published several pieces related to this topic in the *U.S. Japan Women’s Journal* (2007, 2009), *Japanese Language and Literature* (2012), and *Monumenta Nipponica* (2012).

Jennifer Carr is from Washington, DC, and has lived variously in Cannes, Berkeley, and Paris. She has a BA in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley and an MA in Cultural Translation from the American University of Paris, where she focused on twentieth century French literature and translating the work of the Oulipo. She will start a French PhD program at Yale in the fall.

Maryann Corbett is the author of *Breath Control* (David Robert Books) and *Credo for the Checkout Line in Winter* (Able Muse Press). Her poems, essays, and translations have been published widely in journals in print and online and in a number of anthologies. She holds a doctorate in English Language and Literature from the University of Minnesota and works for the Minnesota Legislature.

Andrew Gudgel received his B.A. in Chinese from the Ohio State University in 1989. He spent the next decade-plus working for the US Government, mostly in US embassies overseas, before becoming a freelance writer. He and his wife currently live in Beijing, China.

Victoria Le is a poet, translator, and Michigan native. She was educated at the University of Michigan and received her Master of Fine Arts at Brown University. She currently lives in Arkansas.

Erik R. Lofgren is associate professor of East Asian Studies at Bucknell University where he teaches Japanese language, literature, and film. Although his early research was in identity construction in the war-related literature of Ōoka Shōhei and Umezaki Haruo occasioned by Japan's defeat in the Second World War, he is now working on a project exploring the representation of sexual desire in Japanese film. The translations here are an expression of his long-standing interest in classical Chinese and the nineteenth-century Japanese literati's use of form as a vehicle for poetic expression that differed substantially from the indigenous poetic forms.

Daryl Maude studies Okinawan and Japanese modern literature, and is interested in questions of identity, nationality, and colonialism. He studied Japanese at the University of Leeds and completed an MA in Japanese Literature at SOAS, University of London, before spending two years at Waseda University, Tokyo, as a research student. He currently lives and works in the UK.

J. M. McBirnie is a poet and translator currently enrolled in the University of Texas at El Paso's MFA Program in Bilingual Creative Writing. He received a BA in Theology and Russian from the University of Notre Dame and studied at the KORA Center for Russian Language in Vladimir, Russia.

Susan McLean is a professor of English at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota, where she has taught since 1988. Her translations from Latin, French, and German have appeared in *Arion*, *The Classical Outlook*, *Literary Imagination*, *Moreana*, *Blue Unicorn*, and elsewhere. Her translations of about 500 Latin poems by Martial, *Selected*

*Epigrams*, will be published by the University of Wisconsin Press. A collection of her own poems, *The Best Disguise*, won the 2009 Richard Wilbur Award and was published by the University of Evansville Press.

Philip Metres has written a number of books, including *A Concordance of Leaves* (2013), *abu ghraib arias* (2011), *Ode to Oil* (2011), and *To See the Earth* (Cleveland State 2008). His writing—which has appeared widely, including in *Best American Poetry*—has garnered two NEA fellowships, the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, four Ohio Arts Council Grants, the Beatrice Hawley Award (for the forthcoming *Sand Opera*), the Anne Halley Prize, the Arab American Book Award, and the Cleveland Arts Prize. He is a professor of English at John Carroll University in Cleveland.

Ghada Mourad is a PhD candidate in the department of Comparative Literature and a Schaeffer fellow in literary translation at the International Center of Writing and Translation at the University of California, Irvine. Ghada's translations have appeared in the e-zine *Jadaliyya*, in *A Gathering of the Tribes*, in a volume of essays and poetry titled *Now that We have Tasted Hope: Voices from the Arab Spring*, published by McSweeney's, and in *Shahadat*, a project by ArteEast.

Leanne Ogasawara is a freelance Japanese translator and writer who lived in Japan for twenty years. Her translation work includes academic translations for publication in philosophy, documentary film translations, and strategy reports for the Japanese government as well as literary translations. She is also a contributing editor for the award-winning Japan-based literary magazine *Kyoto Journal*, and has published in the Hong Kong arts magazine *Arts of Asia*. She is currently completing a manuscript of new translations of Takamura Kōtarō's *Chieko Poems*, to be published by Word Palace Press.

John Perry was born in Britain and graduated from Cambridge with a PhD in Arabic and Persian studies. In 1972 he boarded an Atlantic liner and emigrated to America, where for the next thirty-five years he taught languages and assorted literature and culture courses at the University of Chicago. His publications include book-length translations from Arabic, Persian, and Tajik (and

some of his English-language books and articles have been published in Persian, Kurdish, and Turkish versions). He likes to keep in touch with European languages by translating humorous and satirical verse.

Dimitri Psurtsev, a Russian poet and translator of British and American authors, teaches at Moscow State Linguistic University. His two books of poetry, *Ex Roma Tertia* and *Tengiz Notepad*, were published in 2001. He lives outside Moscow.

Randy Schwartz is a writer and educator based in Ann Arbor, MI. He was raised in northern Virginia and is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the University of Michigan. Travels and longer stays in France, Spain, Morocco, and Tunisia have stimulated his writing and his translations from French and Arabic. He has published poems in such publications as *Blueline*, *The MacGuffin*, *The Jerusalem Times*, *California Quarterly*, and *Edge*, which nominated him for a Pushcart Prize in 2011. Schwartz's essay "Unity in Multiplicity: Lessons from the Alhambra," an argument for multiculturalism in higher education, won the National Education Association's "Democracy in Higher Education Award" in 2000.

Claude Clayton Smith is professor emeritus of English at Ohio Northern University. He is the author of seven books and co-editor/translator of an eighth. He holds a BA from Wesleyan, an MAT from Yale, an MFA in fiction from the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa, and a DA from Carnegie Mellon. His latest books are *Ohio Outback: Learning to Love the Great Black Swamp* (Kent State University Press, 2010) and, with Alexander Vaschenko, *The Way of Kinship: An Anthology of Native Siberian Literature* (University of Minnesota, 2010).

Born in the city of Hiroshima, Goro Takano (高野吾朗) is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Medicine at Saga University, Japan, where he teaches English and Japanese/Western literatures. He obtained his M.A. from the University of Tokyo (American Literature), and his Ph.D. from the University of Hawaii at Manoa (English/Creative Writing). His first novel, *With One More Step Ahead*, was published in the US by BlazeVOX in 2009, and his first poetry collection,

titled *Responsibilities of the Obsessed*, was published in the US by BlazeVOX in 2013.

Levi Thompson studies Arabic literature at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is currently exploring the development of modernism in Arabic. His other academic interests include pre-modern Arabic and Persian literature, translation, and literary criticism. Levi has a Masters in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Pennsylvania and was a 2010–2011 Fellow at the Center for Arabic Study Abroad in Cairo.

Alexander Vaschenko was chair of comparative studies in literature and culture at Moscow State University. He held doctorates from the Gorky Institute of World Literature and Moscow State University. He was the author of *America Against America*, *Ethnic Literatures of the United States*, *Historical Epic Folklore of the North American Indians*, and *The Judgement of Paris* (all written in Russian), and, with Claude Clayton Smith, co-editor/translator of *The Way of Kinship: An Anthology of Native Siberian Literature* (University of Minnesota, 2010). He passed away in June 2013.

Rebekah Wilson is a freelance translator in Oxford, UK, and translates from French, German and Dutch. She recently completed an MA in Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia. In 2011–2012, she was chosen to participate in the British Centre for Literary Translation's Mentorship Programme (Dutch to English), and was mentored by David Colmer. In 2011, she was chosen to participate in the first Emerging Translators Programme run by New Books in German.



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